

## II

THE PROGRAM IN ENGLISH AT  
THE LINCOLN SCHOOL OF  
TEACHERS COLLEGE

The standing of the Lincoln School of Teachers College as one of the foremost experimental schools in the country gives, of course, special significance to any statement of the work undertaken there in the different fields of education. Below is reprinted an excellent summary of the theories and practices that are followed in the field of English:

From the first grade to the twelfth the aim of the English course is to teach children to read intelligently and to write and speak in accordance with the accepted standards. It is, however, important that these habits as formed should be accompanied by increased pleasure in reading and by increase in enjoyment of effective writing and speech. We must, therefore, avoid the mistake of treating children like mature persons; the ultimate aim is maturity, but at any given stage of the pupils' development the habits appropriate to that stage must be respected; normal tastes and desires must be used as the means of improving tastes and refining desires. Fundamental mechanical skills—spelling, punctuation, grammar—must of course be taught.

In the elementary school the entire day affords opportunity for oral expression. Questions, criticism by the teacher, the relating of experiences, council meetings, and assemblies provide frequent occasion for effective speech under varying conditions. Correspondence with former classmates, the composition of short plays, and written reports on experiments and investigations call for various kinds of writing. The motive is always to enable someone else to share understanding or enjoyment. In the upper grades certain class periods are given wholly to English, but satisfactory results cannot be secured except through attention to clearness and correctness of expression in all classes.

## SPELLING

The problem of spelling has been attacked

by a committee composed of the teachers of the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grades, and the teachers of English in the high school. Using the Horn-Ashbaugh list, which is made up of several hundred words for each grade, these teachers first dictated to each grade, from the third to the eighth, the list of words for that grade. The same lists were then dictated again, and each pupil made a list of the words he had misspelled. His spelling assignment for the year was then to master the words in his list. If his list was short, he was enabled to use the time saved in doing other work. After completing the six lists now included in this spelling course, the pupil should be able to spell correctly the four thousand words commonly used in correspondence—an accomplishment of no mean order.

In order to insure mastery of misspelled words, careful instruction is given in the method of learning to spell. The permanent mastery of the words studied is as far as possible insured by a series of reviews so planned that they occur at gradually increasing intervals until the word has been retained for a sufficient length of time to justify the conclusion that it is completely learned. During the spelling period the pupils work in pairs, dictating these reviews to each other, each being responsible for the correction of his own. The fact that the pupil keeps his own record and follows his own progress is a great incentive to thorough study.

Although the plan has been in operation too short a time to permit the presentation of any final conclusion, certain good results have already appeared. In the first place, interest is stimulated by directing pupils' efforts toward the mastery of their own known misspellings. Besides this, the record sheets enable teachers to pick out the pupils who have not been studying properly, and those who have special difficulties in spelling and whose weaknesses need individual attention. It is, of course, necessary to supplement the list of four thousand most commonly used words by recording and studying all the misspellings that occur in the ordinary writing done by pupils in their daily work.

In the high school, since English is a dis-



tinct subject, with its own definite period, the relation between English expression and other studies must be maintained by planned cooperation between the English teacher and the teachers of other subjects. At present it seems that such cooperation is best promoted by enabling the teacher of English to spend some time every week in attending the recitations of his class in other subjects, and making the results of his observations the subject of study and instruction during the English periods.

#### COMPOSITION

The outstanding aim of the teaching of composition in the junior high school is the mastery of the fundamental mechanics of written expression. In view of the notorious lack of such mastery even among college students, this may appear an over-ambitious aim, but it is probably, to a very great extent, within reach. Through lists of errors made by pupils in their written work, it is possible to put instruction on an individual basis, and to set up minimum requirements that will secure a more economical use of the time allotted to English in the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades. By the end of the ninth year pupils should be able to write clearly on matters about which they are informed and in which they are interested.

#### LITERATURE

We have pointed out the necessity of using immature taste as a means of arriving at mature taste. If the study of literature in the high school is to result in the enjoyment of good reading, the books read must be carefully graded, so that the standard will be always rising, but never too high. To secure a graded list of readings involves selection from a large amount of material, through observation of the way successive classes of pupils react to it. Selection of material is now going on, by means of oral and written book reports, in which pupils are encouraged to give sincere opinions, under no fear of penalty for failure to agree with the judgment of adult critics or with tradition. Written reports of this nature are filed in the library, and through their use it should

eventually be possible to distribute books by grades in accordance with the developing tastes of growing children. The habit of independent thinking gives a real value to this collection of book reports.

In every school the last-minute rush to finish assigned reading or to "bring in" an essay is well known. This hasty, insufficient reading and writing can be checked if the reading and writing are done under the supervision of the teacher. Interest that begins under such conditions carries over self-imposed tasks. Class work of this nature does not preclude assignments for home study in the ordinary sense, but it assures the cultivation of a proper method of work.

Through varied activities children are reaching higher standards of appreciation and expression. Influences that operate to this end are frequent assemblies, dramatization, and the exchange of letters with pupils of other schools. The pupils of the eighth grade, for example, are carrying on correspondence with a group of young students in Japan: those of the seventh grade have recently begun to correspond with the pupils of a junior high school in California.

#### STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

The pupils publish a small magazine known as "Lincoln Lore," which provides a motive for the most careful work by contributors throughout the school. The quality of its contents is due to a standard set by the student editors, with the guidance, but not under the dictation of the teacher adviser. Besides "Lincoln Lore," the monthly magazine, students issue another publication, "The Lincolnian," the year-book of the graduating class.

The contents of both are largely assembled, criticized, and rewritten in the English classes, where opportunity is given, not only for composition, but also for judging the value of contributions. The staff of "Lincoln Lore" consists of twelve high school pupils, representatives of the elementary grades, and an English teacher. The amount of material used is restricted, in order that what is published may be of satisfactory grade.